

Anxiety affects approximately 40 million adults or 18 percent of the population nationwide.¹ One in three women experience anxiety over their lifetimes.² Furthermore, only one-third of those affected receive treatment.¹ Because of our emerging understanding of the role of gut-brain axis disruption in mental health conditions like anxiety and depression, I recommend starting with the elimination diet for patients with anxiety. Elimination diets are the gold standard for identifying food

allergies, sensitivities, and intolerances but can also be used to address many other symptoms like anxiety in the practice of personalized lifestyle medicine. An elimination diet is a tool and an eating plan designed to omit/avoid certain foods or groups of foods that may cause an adverse reaction or symptoms. For my patients with anxiety, I recommend cutting out caffeine and sugar completely because they may trigger anxious symptoms and blood sugar issues.

Four steps to an elimination diet

Step 1: Plan. You and your healthcare provider will work on identifying foods that might be causing you discomfort. It is a good idea to keep a food journal so you can keep track of the foods you eat and the accompanying symptoms you may have throughout the day.

Step 2: Avoid. For the next two weeks, follow the elimination diet—no exceptions allowed! Pay close attention to food labels. Don't eat the foods in any form—whole or as ingredients in other foods. This will be challenging, especially when eating out. If your symptoms become severe or increase for more than two days, consult your healthcare practitioner. Be sure you are getting adequate nutrition during the elimination phase.

Step 3: Challenge. If your symptoms improve, start "challenging" your body with the eliminated foods, one group at a time. Continue to keep track of your symptoms in your food journal.

Step 4: New way of eating. Based on your results with the elimination diet, work with your practitioner to help plan a new way of eating so you can avoid unpleasant symptoms in the future. You may need to try several times before you are able to identify all your problem foods. Don't give up!

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
Grains/starches	Rice, quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, millet, sorghum, teff, oats (gluten-free)	Corn, wheat, rye, barley, spelt, farro, semolina, bulgur, kamut, oats
Legumes	All beans, lentils	Soy
Fruits	All except citrus	Citrus fruits (orange, tangerine)
Vegetables	All	Creamed, processed
Dairy/dairy alternatives	Almond milk, coconut milk, coconut yogurt, hazelnut milk, hemp milk, rice milk	Milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream
Protein	Chicken, Cornish hen, fish, lamb, turkey, wild game (buffalo, elk, venison)	Beef, pork, eggs, egg substitutes, shellfish, processed/canned meats
Oils/fats	Avocado, coconut oil, flaxseed oil, grapeseed oil, high-oleic safflower oil, extra virgin olive oil, olives, sesame oil—cold/expeller pressed, unrefined oil	Margarine, shortening, butter, ghee (dairy based)—avoid only if recommended by practitioner
Nuts/seeds	All	None
Beverages	Noncaffeinated herbal teas, unsweetened rooibos tea, water	Sodas, diet sodas, energy/sport drinks, alcoholic beverages, coffee, nonherbal teas, and other caffeinated or decaf beverages
Condiments	All herbs, spices, lemon, lime, horseradish, mustard, unsweetened salsa and tomato sauce, unsweetened vinegars	Extracts, chocolate, ketchup, barbecue sauce, Dijon mustard, relish, prepackaged seasonings, mayonnaise, and dressings with gluten/dairy/sugars/MSG
Sweeteners	Luo han guo (monk fruit) extract, Stevia	Sugar, honey, fructose, molasses, fruit juices, agave, corn syrup, glucose, sucrose, dextrose

Note: Look for organic varieties for foods on the allowed list.

The 30-day elimination diet at a glance

Days 1-3: Ready. Set. Go. Follow the guidelines and select only from the foods you are allowed to eat. In your food journal make a note if you feel some discomfort, particularly if you are accustomed to caffeinated drinks and highly sugared or processed foods. This is normal and to be expected during the initial phase of the program.

Days 4-28: Main program. Continue with your program, eating from the allowed food list and incorporating any additional directions from your healthcare provider. Continue to note how you feel each day, in particular, any discomfort you may experience.

Day 29: Reintroduction. You now start the process of reintroducing a wider range of foods, a very important part of your elimination diet. Go easy and don't overdo it. It's very important that you gently restart the more serious process of digestion that has had time to rest over the past few weeks. This process will bring to light important information for you and your healthcare practitioner and may be useful in pinpointing hidden food allergies or intolerances.

Guidelines for reintroducing foods

Pick the food that you want to test/challenge and eat a minimum of three challenges (small portion for breakfast and larger portions during lunch and dinner) with that food in a day and then observe the next two days for outcome, but do not eat the food during these two days. If no reaction, you may resume eating that food.

If reaction occurs, note the reaction and avoid until rediscussed or rechallenged after a minimum of one month. If an equivocal reaction occurs, refrain from eating that food for two weeks and rechallenge. After waiting more days, you may then challenge with a different food.

References:

1. Anxiety and Depression Association of America. Statistics on Anxiety and Depression. <https://adaa.org/about-adaa/press-room/facts-statistics>. Accessed January 4, 2019.
2. McLean CP, Asnaani A, Litz BT, Hofmann SG. Gender differences in anxiety disorders: prevalence, course of illness, comorbidity and burden of illness. *J Psychiatr Res.* 2011;45(8):1027-1035.



Autoimmune/Anti-Inflammatory Food Plan by Sara Gottfried, MD

The Autoimmune/Anti-Inflammatory Food Plan features a variety of whole, minimally processed foods in quantities that deliver a modified Paleo, balanced macronutrient plan. The plan emphasizes colorful phytonutrient- and antioxidant-rich foods, leafy greens, and the cruciferous and allium families, in particular. In addition to providing nutrient density, this plan is designed to stabilize blood sugar, support and heal the gastrointestinal and immune systems, as well as reduce inflammation. It has a specific food list and macronutrient profile to support your health goals:

30% carbohydrate, 40% protein, 30% fat

Special concerns

Unfortunately, even some nutritious foods can cause challenges for those with autoimmune, gastrointestinal, or inflammatory conditions. Let your doctor know if any of these categories are troublesome for you and ask for the specific handout for more information.

- **Nightshades**—Nightshades are excluded on this plan. Examples include potatoes (but not sweet potatoes), tomatoes, eggplant, okra, and peppers, as well as certain spices (cayenne pepper and paprika).
- **FODMAPs**—Some common foods contain specific, poorly absorbed carbohydrate compounds, which may cause gastrointestinal issues. Examples include wheat, apples, onions, cow's milk, and yogurt.
- **Histamines**—These compounds occur naturally in many foods, such as aged or fermented foods. They are also produced by the body during times of stress and allergic response and can cause reactions similar to an allergic response.

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
Grains/starches	Rice, quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, millet, sorghum, teff, oats (gluten-free)	Barley, bulgur, corn, farro, kamut, oats, rye, semolina, spelt, wheat
Legumes	All beans, lentils	Soy
Fruits	All; ideally berries	Canned, dried fruits, fruit juices
Vegetables	All except nightshade vegetables	Creamed, processed
Dairy/dairy alternatives	Almond milk, coconut milk, coconut yogurt, hazelnut milk, hemp milk	Cow's milk, ice cream, rice milk, yogurt
Protein	Beef, chicken, Cornish hen, fish, lamb, pork, turkey, wild game (buffalo, elk, venison)	Cheese, eggs, egg substitutes, shellfish, processed/canned meats
Oils/fats	Avocado, coconut oil, flaxseed oil, grapeseed oil, high-oleic safflower oil, extra virgin olive oil, olives, sesame oil (cold/expeller pressed), unrefined oil	Butter, ghee (dairy based)—avoid only if recommended by practitioner, margarine, shortening
Nuts/seeds	All except peanuts	Peanuts
Beverages	Noncaffeinated herbal teas, sparkling water, unsweetened rooibos tea, water	Sodas, diet sodas, energy/sport drinks, alcoholic beverages, coffee, nonherbal teas, and other caffeinated or decaf beverages
Condiments	All herbs, bone broth, cacao, horseradish, lemon, lime, liquid amino acid, miso, mustard, sea salt, spices, , unsweetened vinegars	Barbecue sauce, chocolate, Dijon mustard, dressings with gluten/dairy/sugars/MSG, food extracts (e.g., vanilla, almond, etc.), ketchup, relish, prepackaged seasonings
Sweeteners	Luo han guo (monk fruit) extract, Stevia	Agave, artificial sweeteners, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juices, glucose, honey, molasses, sucrose, sugar

Note: Look for organic varieties for foods on the allowed list.

The High-Protein/Phytonutrient-Dense Food Plan was developed to facilitate loss of unhealthy fat while maintaining healthy lean tissues like muscle. It has a specific food list and macronutrient profile to support your health goals:

20% carbohydrate, 40% protein, and 40% fat

Below is a food list that includes foods rich in taste with a lower glycemic index (GI) or glycemic load (GL). These foods produce a lower glucose and insulin response, which helps balance blood sugar—helping to curb hunger and cravings. It's unlikely that these foods (in the serving sizes suggested) will be a trigger for overeating.

Two main meals and 3 snacks (including 1 program shake, if prescribed) can be eaten in any order. Some people prefer a lighter breakfast (e.g., shake), while others prefer to eat a more substantial breakfast (e.g., omelet) and then have a snack for lunch (e.g., soup or salad).

Main meals

Eat 2 main meals daily, which ideally consist of 1 meal protein and 3 servings of approved vegetables. For heartier meals, incorporate a portion of fresh greens, as well as 1-2 servings of approved oils/fats.

Snacks & protein options

If using prescribed program shakes, they can be mixed with unsweetened varieties of soy milk, almond milk, or coconut milk (boxed, not canned)—and ice or a fresh/frozen fruit serving may be added to make a smoothie. Try to vary your choices so you look forward to the next one!

For your other daily snacks, choose a snack protein (typically ½ the size of a meal protein) or a serving of nuts/seeds. When you skip meals/snacks, you may have a tendency to overeat at the next meal. It's best to spread your food out, eating about every 3-4 hours. A good protein snack will carry you over from lunch to supper!

Avoid keeping too many unapproved snack items around the home or workplace. Stock up only on healthy snacks: raw vegetables, string cheese, and hardboiled eggs can make simple snacks when you feel tempted.

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
Grains/starches	None	All: Amaranth, barley, buckwheat, bulgur, corn, farro, kamut, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rye, semolina, sorghum, spelt, wheat, teff
Legumes	Soy	All except soy
Fruits	All; ideally berries (limit 1-2 servings/day)	Canned, dried fruits, fruit juices
Vegetables	Nonstarchy vegetables	Creamed, processed, starchy vegetables
Dairy/dairy alternatives	Almond milk, buttermilk, coconut milk, coconut yogurt, Greek yogurt, hazelnut milk, hemp milk, cow's milk	Ice cream
Protein	Beef, cheese, chicken, Cornish hen, eggs, egg substitutes, fish, lamb, pork, shellfish, turkey, wild game (buffalo, elk, venison)	Processed/canned meats
Oils/fats	Avocado, avocado oil, butter, coconut oil, flaxseed oil, ghee, grapeseed oil, high-oleic safflower oil, extra virgin olive oil, olives, sesame oil (cold/expeller pressed), unrefined oil	Margarine, shortening
Nuts/seeds	All except peanuts	Peanuts
Beverages	Coffee (limit to 1 serving/day), noncaffeinated herbal teas, sparkling water, unsweetened rooibos tea, water	Alcoholic beverages, diet sodas, energy/sport drinks, sodas
Condiments	All herbs, bone broth, cacao, horseradish, lemon, lime, liquid amino acid, miso, mustard, sea salt, spices, unsweetened salsa and tomato sauce, unsweetened vinegars	Barbecue sauce, chocolate, Dijon mustard, dressings with gluten/dairy/sugars/MSG, food extracts (e.g., vanilla, almond, etc.), ketchup, mayonnaise, relish, prepackaged seasonings
Sweeteners	Luo han guo (monk fruit) extract, Stevia	Agave, artificial sweeteners, sugar alcohols, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juices, glucose, honey, molasses, sucrose, sugar

Note: Look for organic varieties for foods on the allowed list.

What is a ketogenic diet?

A ketogenic diet (i.e., “keto diet”) is a very low-carbohydrate way of eating that delivers moderate amounts of high-quality dietary protein and high amounts of healthy dietary fat. This reduction in carbohydrate intake helps the body shift toward a state that promotes the breakdown of fats (from the diet and your body) to produce ketone bodies and enter a state known as “ketosis.” When following a ketogenic diet, your brain, as well as other organs, depend on ketones as an energy source. Ketones are produced in the body once you have reached a state of ketosis and can be measured in the blood and urine to ensure that you stay in ketosis during the keto diet.

The Ketogenic Food Plan has a specific food list and approximate macronutrient profile to support your health goals:

~10% carbohydrate, ~20% protein, ~70% fat

What does a healthy ketogenic meal look like?

A ketogenic meal is comprised of approximately 10% of calories coming from healthy carbohydrates such as leafy greens, nonstarchy vegetables, and berries; 20% of calories coming from proteins such as omega-3-rich fish and grass-fed animal protein; and ~70% of calories coming from high-quality fats such as avocado, unsaturated and medium-chain triglyceride oils, nuts and seeds, and coconut. This 10/20/70 ratio is a guideline for the macronutrient distribution for a given day, including meals, snacks, and beverages. Your practitioner may recommend a slightly modified ratio based on your physical activity and personal health goals.

When following this ketogenic diet, you need to restrict your total carbohydrates to 10% of your daily calories. For example, for a 2,000 calorie diet, you would need to consume below 50 grams per day. This can be quite a change, depending on what types of foods you are currently eating. The information in the following sections will help you to plan your meals and snacks so that you can keep carbohydrates low while eating enough protein and fat. Your practitioner can help you with recommendations for daily servings in each of the following categories.

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
Grains/starches	None	All
Legumes	None	All
Fruits	Berries	All except berries
Vegetables	Nonstarchy vegetables	Creamed, processed, root and tuber vegetables (beets, carrots, peas, potatoes, etc.)
Dairy/dairy alternatives	Greek yogurt, kefir, cow's milk	Dairy alternatives (almond milk, cashew milk, etc.), ice cream
Protein	Beef, cheese, chicken, Cornish hen, eggs, fish, lamb, liver, pork, sausage, shellfish, turkey, wild game (buffalo, elk, venison)	Processed/canned meats
Oils/fats	Avocado, avocado oil, butter, coconut milk (canned), coconut oil, cream, cream cheese, flaxseed oil, ghee, grapeseed oil, high-oleic safflower oil, MCT oil/powder, olive oil (extra virgin), olives, sesame oil, sour cream *All oils-cold/expeller pressed, unrefined	Margarine, shortening
Nuts/seeds	All	None
Beverages	Coffee, espresso, green tea, noncaffeinated herbal teas, sparkling water, unsweetened rooibos tea, water	Alcoholic beverages, diet sodas, energy/sport drinks, sodas
Condiments	All herbs, bone broth, horseradish, lemon, lime, liquid amino acid, miso, mustard, sea salt, spices, unsweetened salsa and tomato sauce, unsweetened vinegars	Barbecue sauce, chocolate, Dijon mustard, dressings with gluten/dairy/sugars/MSG, food extracts (e.g., vanilla, almond, etc.), ketchup, relish, prepackaged seasonings
Sweeteners	Luo han guo (monk fruit) extract, Stevia	Agave, artificial sweeteners, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juices, glucose, honey, molasses, sucrose, sugar

Note: Look for organic varieties for foods on the allowed list.

This food plan is based on the Mediterranean diet. However, it also incorporates modern nutrition research, such as the health benefits of phytonutrients, a variety of healthy fats, and moderate grain intake. The resulting “modified Mediterranean” approach emphasizes fresh, whole, minimally processed, phytonutrient- and antioxidant-rich foods. It has a specific food list and macronutrient profile to support your health goals:

40% carbohydrate, 30% protein, 30% fat

In addition to providing nutrient density and a low glycemic response, the Mediterranean Food Plan is designed to help reduce inflammation, considered to be a contributing factor to many chronic diseases.

Food Group	Foods Allowed	Foods to Avoid
Grains/starches	Amaranth, barley, buckwheat, bulgur, farro, kamut, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rye, semolina, spelt, sorghum, spelt, teff, wheat	Corn
Legumes	All beans, lentils	Soy
Fruits	All	Canned, fruit juices
Vegetables	All	Creamed, processed
Dairy/dairy alternatives	Almond milk, coconut milk, coconut yogurt, Greek yogurt, hazelnut milk, hemp milk, kefir, cow's milk, rice milk	Ice cream
Protein	Beef, cheese, chicken, Cornish hen, eggs, egg substitute, fish, lamb, pork, shellfish, turkey, wild game (buffalo, elk, venison)	Processed/canned meats
Oils/fats	Avocado, butter, coconut oil, flaxseed oil, ghee, grapeseed oil, high-oleic safflower oil, extra virgin olive oil, olives, sesame oil (cold/expeller pressed), unrefined oil	Margarine, shortening
Nuts/seeds	All except peanuts	Peanuts
Beverages	Coffee (limit to 1 serving/day), noncaffeinated herbal teas, sparkling water, unsweetened rooibos tea, water	Alcoholic beverages, diet sodas, energy/sport drinks, sodas
Condiments	All herbs, bone broth, cacao, horseradish, lemon, lime, liquid amino acid, miso, mustard, sea salt, spices, unsweetened salsa and tomato sauce, unsweetened vinegars	Barbecue sauce, chocolate, Dijon mustard, dressings with gluten/dairy/sugars/MSG, food extracts (E.g., vanilla, almond, etc.), ketchup, mayonnaise, relish, prepackaged seasonings
Sweeteners	Luo han guo (monk fruit) extract, Stevia	Agave, artificial sweeteners, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juices, glucose, honey, molasses, sucrose, sugar

Note: Look for organic varieties for foods on the allowed list.